

MORE ON SPECIAL OBLITERATORS AND PERFINS by Mike Burrows

When writing about the cancellations identifying Perfins in the September 1975 Bulletin, it was stated, when dealing with the firm of W. H. Smith & Son, that no Perfins with the special obliterator were known to me. This is still the case, at least as far as Figure 7 in that article is concerned.

Illustrated is a further example of another type that was allocated to Smiths. Recently, a single ½d. vermilion of the "Jubilee" issue was found to have a similar cancel, except the inner ring was 19mm in diameter, instead of the 20mm of the illustration (reduced). Most of the date of the cancel appears on the stamp - 9 JY 9?



Although not identified in the recent catalogues, the Perfin was expected to be:

390 W.H.S./&S.14,12,10/12,10 4½mm (IIIa)

Instead, and this is a puzzle, the Perfin was a single letter - R 12 5½mm. Checking through the catalogue, the user of the R is not identified. Going to those used by W. H. Smith & Son, the listing is:

380.1 WHS 12,10,9 4½mm (15½ wide)

380.3 WHS 14,16,10 5,7½,5mm

The first die, 380.1, is too modern so can be discounted. The second, 380.3, is roughly of the period in question. But the earliest examples that I have are on King Edward VII issues. The only clearly dated copy being February 1908. The Perfin continuing through to the early KGV issues, the so-called dark colours.

So to the questions:

1. When did W. H. Smith & Son first use Perfins?
2. What was the style of their first Perfin?
3. Does the proper Perfin and special cancel exist on a stamp?
4. Who used the R Perfin illustrated?

In regard to questions 1 and 2, was the die 390 definitely used by Smiths? Earlier writers seemed to think so. Both Jennings and Bowman give the identity and list 1d.

plates: 134 158 171 175 176 177 185. My own copy is plate 204 with an ordinary London WCI postmark. Can anyone confirm this usage with a cover?

A security underprint is recorded for Smiths reading: W.H.SMITH/AND SON,/186 STRAND. on 1d. plates 73 78 92 97 102 103 109 111 114 121 124 131 134 147 152 164 169 173 174 183, all in red reading sideways, either up or down. The 2d. plates 9 and 14 in blue underprinting are also known.

Historical Profile:

Established at Duke Street, Grosvenor Square, London, about 1821 by two brothers, Henry Edward and William Henry Smith, as News Vendors. This developed into a business of wholesale and retail Newspaper Agents, Booksellers, Librarians, Bookbinders, Printers, Stationers and Advertising Agents.

Controlled entirely by W. H. Smith from 1829 to 1846, when his son, of the same name, was taken into partnership. Opening their first railway bookstall at Euston Station 1st November 1848, they had over 200 in operation on the stations of the railways of the London & Northwestern and the Great Western by the end of 1905.

They went through various partnerships until the name Smith disappeared in 1913, when the Hon. W. F. D. Smith took the title Viscount Hambledon upon the death of his mother, the wife of the second W. H. Smith.

The company was registered on 9th March 1929 as W. H. Smith and Son Limited, to take over the business and certain assets of W. H. Smith & Son.

H. S. King & Co. additional stamps reported:

fig. 2 ½d. plate 3
2d. plate 15
3d. plates 20 and 21
1½d. SG 167, Sc 80

William Dawson & Sons.

fig. 5 3d. on 6d. SG 159, Sc 95
1d. SG 166, Sc 79